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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #12 (SO12)

(Conflict Reduced in Mindanao and Other Areas Vulnerable to Violence)

Sulu gov't focuses on public service

ZAMBOANGA CITY.— Sulu government employees are expected to become more efficient public servants in the coming days.

Eighty employees of the Sulu provincial government graduated on July 28 from the five-month Public Service Excellence, Ethics and Accountability program conducted by the Western Mindanao State University's (WMSU) Center for Local Governance.

Office chiefs, supervisors, and personnel of 13 departments were trained on basic customer service skills, improvement of services, values formation and ethics, standard behavior in decision making and public service, accountability in public service, corruption tendencies and perception, and the role of culture and values.

There were also strategic planning sessions to come up with action plans to curtail possible occurrences of corruption and inefficiency.

“I am sure that all of them now have understood the importance of adhering and committing themselves to the best principles of governance, ethics, and accountability in the delivery of efficient and effective government services,” said Dr. Eldigario Gonzales, president of the WMSU.

He added that the university “is dedicated to the ideals of good governance and strongly believes that [it] is attainable through the

active involvement of dedicated government officials and employees. Through our University Center for Local Governance, we have advocated, initiated, participated in and implemented good governance programs and projects.”

The graduates during the closing rite pledged “to commit ourselves in attaining sustainable quality public service, with the highest degree of professionalism duly guided by our department service vision, values, strategies and standards.” They formed a provincial service audit team to monitor and check personnel performance.

The graduation ceremony at the Tabang Sulu building at the provincial capitol complex was led by Gov. Benjamin Loong and Dr. Steven Rood, regional head of The Asia Foundation.

The program gets technical assistance from the foundation through the provincial government under the Transparent Accountable Governance project, which is also funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

The project team is headed by Dr. Ofelio Mendoza, Center for Local Governance director, and professor Socorro Rebecca Felonia as project coordinator.

The program also serves as a “campaign to improve organizational culture, thereby encouraging the shift to public service

ethics and accountability that promote good governance,” the foundation’s media advisory said.

The provincial government has committed to conduct annual performance evaluation of all employees of the provincial government to encourage recognition, promotion, and a merit system to motivate employees and upgrade facilities of all departments to ensure quality of services, among other objectives.

Since 1954, The Asia Foundation has collaborated with partners from the public and the private sectors to support grass-roots initiatives and programs in a wide range of areas such as good governance, human rights, legal accountability and dispute resolution, conflict management, promotion of human rights, anti-trafficking and violence against women, among others.

It has two field offices in Mindanao — Cotabato and Zamboanga — as these areas are deemed needful of the foundation’s programs and services.

The Asia Foundation assists local governments, the private sectors, and nongovernmental organizations to work toward peace and development in Mindanao.

It supports programs aimed to improve municipal governance in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao, grass-roots planning, reforms in local governance and better constituent services.

(Source: Business World, 8/19/05, page S2/7)